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ABSTRACT

Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) teachers face many challenges as they attempt to reconcile the demands of educational providers, learners, and government agencies with their own values and beliefs about the aims and purposes of literacy. Recent research on ALBE programs was examined from the standpoint of their relationship to the following: selected historical trends in literacy provision and the forces underlying the provision of "second-chance" education for adults, the language of "new times" used in much of the dialogue shaping ALBE provision in the 1990s, and the manner in which literacy has been deemed a key factor in Australia's changing economic climate. Dialogue and the relearning classroom were identified as two concepts that have been called central to how teachers might meet the challenges of classes in which meeting learners' needs proves highly problematic. Other research has cast doubt on the benefits of egalitarian relationships between teachers and learners. Professional development programs for ALBE teachers need to address three issues: the practicalities of teaching critical literacy, the means by which teachers advocate for change within their organization, and the kind of organization that will best provide teachers with an effective resource base for teaching critical literacy. (Contains 35 references.) (MN)

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Professional development needs of ALBE teachers working in changing contexts

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Introduction

ALBE educators face many challenges as they attempt to reconcile the demands of educational providers, learners and government agencies with their own values and beliefs about the aims and purposes of literacy. In this paper I want to expand on a number of issues that I think influence how educators will meet these challenges in the 1990s. Three key points drive the issues I discuss in this paper:

- some historical trends in literacy provision and two recurring promises within adult literacy which drive 'second chance' education for adults
- the language of 'new times' which pervades much of the discourse shaping ALBE provision in the 1990s
- the manner in which literacy has been drawn to centre stage as a key factor in Australia's changing economic fortunes

I relate the above three points to some recent research on adult literacy classroom practice and the constraints operating on one particular teacher. I then draw on implications for staff development guided by the ideals of critical literacy and my desire to develop viable forms of critical pedagogy.

Promises of literacy embedded in historical provision

In a previous paper (Shore:1992:411) I have summarised some trends in adult literacy provision. I suggest that historically much adult literacy and basic education provision in Western industrialised countries intends, in part, to address the inadequacies of initial schooling and/or communication difficulties experienced by speakers of languages other than English. Basic education courses are said to provide learners with opportunities to improve their educational qualifications enabling access to further study or employment and training opportunities.

In the 1970s and 80s particularly in places like Australia and the UK much of this provision was underpinned by liberal humanistic notions of student-centred education and holistic programs geared towards meeting individual needs associated with personal and academic development. Literacy provision specifically offered a 'second chance' to individuals who, for one reason or another, had not acquired a number of basic skills in initial schooling.

In the 1980s and 90s there is still some emphasis on the need for a second chance for many adults who have been marginalised or excluded from formal schooling. However I believe this focus has been overtaken in recent times by the concept of 'lifelong learning'. This shifts the educational focus away from deficits emerging from initial schooling

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experiences to new learning demands made on adults as they mature in a rapidly changing society.

In the 1990s in particular new learning opportunities are closely associated with vocational outcomes. Thus, while the connection with lifelong learning has broadened the concept of adult basic education to include social and vocational responsibilities throughout the whole of life, the Australian focus in the 1990s has been constrained by the way in which literacy is being drawn centre stage to take its place with the other 'nuts and bolts' that Alan Matheson (1990:5) says are central to the process of micro economic reform. In Australia adult literacy has been securely plugged in to the economic reform machine.

Lifelong and/or second chance adult literacy programs make a number of promises. First, they offer a 'new' educational life to learners, not only a second chance at education, but a different kind of chance, to learn in an environment which will support learner participation in program planning and address the immediate social, academic and personal needs of the learner. This promise is consistent with commonly held adult education practices which offer learners opportunities to choose and negotiate program content and process. The pamphlets produced in the series Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Education offer some very practical examples of how educators might meet ALBE learners needs.

The second promise is that adult literacy participation offers an improved quality of life for literacy participants because literacy development will be accompanied by employment and/or vocational mobility. Brian Street (1984:101) suggests that this promise offers a means of 'social mobility, overcoming poverty and increased self fulfilment'.

Both Street, and Jenny Horsman, a Canadian feminist literacy worker, among others, are critical of these promises however, and suggest they need to be examined in view of wider social relations which impact on learners' lives. When considering different social groups for example women, Horsman (1989) believes that educational achievement, and literacy ability in particular, plays a minor part in women's prospects for a 'second chance'. Her doctoral thesis describes how women's lives are systematically disorganised by many of the material and social conditions embedded in late capitalist society.

The point is that adult education, like schooling, conveys cultural values and expectations and much of what is transmitted through educational practice serves to sustain

imbalances in relations of power between 'advantaged' and 'disadvantaged' social groups[1].

The promises of adult literacy provision present opportunities to challenge traditional power relations between teachers and learners and contest the ways in which knowledge

[1]Even these terms 'advantaged' and 'disadvantaged' obscure the processes by which individuals or identifiable social groups become and remain 'advantaged' or 'disadvantaged' (Lankshear:1987). The presence of these categories is presented as 'natural' rather than a product of power relations which might work to sustain the polarities.

is produced and reproduced in educational programs. In this way the constraining and controlling nature of literacy is also addressed.

In this paper I have tried to make apparent my own interest in a form of critical literacy which acknowledges that relations of power are at the heart of social interaction. Critical literacy practice offers alternative perspectives on social relations and challenges many of our taken for granted assumptions about how the world operates; that is what power is, how it is commonly associated with the distribution of material goods (See Iris Young (1990) for a useful critique of social justice and relations of power), why some people accrue material wealth and others don't, and how if we emphasise relations of power rather than goods and resources normally associated with power then we have to seriously rethink the forms of social action which might move us towards a more just and equitable society. Critical literacy practice will be directed towards developing skills and orientations which interrogate language practices by examining the forms of literacy which might be used (McCormack:1990) and how learners might position themselves in relation to texts (Luke:1990).

ALBE context in the 1990s

In Australia ALBE educators currently face many demands and they rarely have time or the opportunity to interrogate these demands for how they might improve the lot of learners' lives. While many teachers recognise the social justice implications of their ALBE work the current political and economic climate makes it doubly difficult to have calls for a critical pedagogy heard. In the last year or so a number of writers (Lankshear: 1991, Luke:1992, Westwood:1990) have made reference to the language of 'New Times' and the naturalness with which this language and subsequent action is being taken up as the solution to economic woes besetting Australian and international economies.

Sallie Westwood (1990:43) notes that 'New Times' is merely another name to describe the 'economic processes of restructuring which have been apparent in the last 30 years'. 'New Times' involves a shift away from a labor process which has traditionally separated workers from the intellectual creation of work and the complex decisions associated with how the work should be implemented. Instead 'New Times' favours language and processes which have become familiar territory to ALBE workers; multi skilling, flexible specialisation, employee (read learner) participation, broadbanding, and 'working smarter'. These processes increasingly highlight the importance of communication skills in the workplace and the centrality of language and literacy to everyday communication. In a very real sense they are the nuts and bolts of workplace reform.

Griff Foley (1992) described award restructuring, one of the more commonly known Australian processes of 'New Times', as 'capitalist reorganisation'. He proposes that this term more appropriately addresses the intent of the driving force behind educational and industrial change in Australia. 'New Times' language exhorts people to be more efficient and productive. In responding to 'New Times' adult educators have:

worked harder with continually shrinking resources, become more accountable (accepting 'strategic planning' and 'quality assurance'), more oriented to the workplace (embracing skills training and competency-based learning), and more entrepreneurial (Foley:1992:108).

'New Times' in themselves add new and powerful pressures to the ALBE field which is working hard to come to terms with its new found popularity. It is deftly fending off moves to incorporate the historical promises of literacy into an economic framework which obscures many of the social justice intentions inherent in the field.

I suggest that if we proclaim critical literacy as a means of coming to terms with teaching and learning in 'New Times' then we will have to offer some very grounded strategies and support to educators left to practice critical literacy in what may often be hostile educational environments. Previous Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) evaluations (DEET:1990) and National Adult Literacy Projects (NSW TAFE:1992, Shore et al:1993) have made mention of the incredible stresses within the adult literacy, language and numeracy field. I believe that ALBE educators might meet the challenges of critical literacy practice within an already stressed context by exploring further two key concepts that are central to understandings of critical practice; dialogue and the 'relearning classroom' (Shor in Shor and Freire :1987:101).

Dialogue and critical literacy in the 'relearning' classroom

In the field of adult literacy Paulo Freire has been a significant voice in the literature inspiring many writers (Wallerstein:1983, Bee:1989) to further develop a practical understanding of emancipatory adult literacy education[2]. It is the practical applications of radical theory which I have been particularly interested in exploring and have found that, bearing in mind Rockhill's criticism, both Freire and Ira Shor offer interesting examples of 'practice' through elaboration of the concepts, 'dialogue' and the 'relearning classroom'. In a recent study I examined in particular the notion of dialogue which is central to critical literacy.

Dialogue is a concept at the heart of radical discourses of education (Freire:1970, Shor:1980, Allman and Wallis:1990). It assumes two-way communication, free of overt or covert coercion. Its intention is to expose the taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in our understandings of the social world and it takes place in an environment of respect where enquiry is not guided by a sense of competition for the 'best' view. Through the Freirean notion of dialogue (Shor & Freire:1987:102) speakers develop an understanding of the political and historical context of their lives.

Dialogue is much more complex than the everyday concept of discussion. The latter 'confirms the dominant mass culture and the inherited, official shape of knowledge' (Shor in Shor & Freire:1987:99). In this way it reproduces much conventional wisdom and does little to examine the flaws in explanations of inequality. In contrast dialogue intends to 'make the familiar strange and the strange familiar' (McLaren:1989:164) by

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[2]Kathleen Rockhill (1989) offers a scathing review of Freire's work for his inability to address gender issues and the difficulties associated with developing grounded plans for action from fairly obscure theoretical writings. I acknowledge these flaws and believe that as with many writers espousing transformative work there are still a number of unexplored tensions in enacting emancipatory practice.

challenging what we have come to believe are 'natural' explanations of inequality. Dialogue takes place in a context of ongoing power relations continually evolving between speakers at any one time, and acknowledges the historical nature of social relations. That is it takes account of social affiliations, the historical context of people's lives and the ways in which being black, female, able-bodied, middle class and/or young might influence how we interact with others, and how others will expect us to operate in that interaction.

Dialogue encourages learners to think critically about the 'naturalness' of explanations of social interaction; for example rather than seeing adult literacy difficulties emerging from illness or itinerant family life these difficulties may be exacerbated by dissonance between family and school values. In addition dialogue requires that teachers and teacher educators establish new relations of power in their classrooms so that learners and teachers 'relearn' rather than transfer knowledge. It is this principle of the 'relearning' classroom which underpins many approaches to radical education. It forms the second of the two concepts which I believe offer some promise for ALBE professional development for critical practice in the 1990s.

To develop a dialogic classroom wherein teachers and learners come together to 'relearn' is a complex matter. In the current educational and political climate there is an increasing tendency to look for economically efficient means of improving both teacher and learner productivity. Thus frameworks, guidelines and prepackaged resource materials are sought as a means of simplifying teachers' work, and making teaching and learning a more predictable and efficient process.

A critical approach to dialogue suggests it is not a technical skill which can be outlined as a series of steps. It is a labyrinthine journey of explorations probing the nature of issues and their relevance to learners' and teachers' lives. It is complex and sometimes uncomfortable precisely because it challenges what appears to be natural. It results in action; however, in the classroom this action is constrained by social and political contexts. By definition it is not a method; rather it is a fluid process which Ira Shor (1987:102) claims can revert to 'dogma' if not practised as a 'genuine open exchange' between participants.

In this sense I think even critical or radical approaches are in danger of becoming precious about the positioning and privileging of various views about what should be learnt and how, the kinds of 'outcomes' desired, and how those outcomes surface in learners' lives. (See Ellsworth (1989) and Clarke (1989) for further critiques.) Many writers (Wickert (1990), Lankshear (1991), Bee (1989) Luke (1990, 1992) are interested in privileging a particular form of literacy, that is critical literacy, and so am I. What I am less sure about is exactly how teachers make judgements which will be in the best interests of learners; judgements which situate learning historically and politically and 'really' give learners an opportunity to make decisions about the what, how, and why of learning.

The teaching process by which these judgements are made seems to me to be much more complex in 'New Times' where teachers are under pressure to meet the demands of very

vocal and powerful groups who believe they have a privileged right to control the educational process.

I think the concepts of dialogue and the relearning classroom seem to be at the heart of how teachers might meet the challenges of classes in which it is highly problematic to meet learners needs - a central promise of literacy provision. My own belief is that reified educational techniques (Shore:1991, Foley:1992), in the form of step by step frameworks, are likely to leave educators more disempowered and frustrated as they attempt to realise the promises of literacy for learners.

Nevertheless I believe it is still worthwhile to examine the concept of dialogue in the relearning classroom and establish an 'idealised framework' (Troyna and Foster:1988) which might help teachers to situate the teaching judgements they make.

An 'idealised framework' for dialogue in the relearning classroom

Nina Wallerstein (1983) has grounded the concept of dialogue in some practical questioning strategies teachers might adopt as part of classroom practice. She outlines a 'problem-posing' strategy which involves three stages, one of which incorporates a five step inductive questioning process. She is careful to point out however that particular questioning strategies are always located within a three stage framework of listening, discussion and questioning, and action. Wallerstein's teaching and questioning framework is shown in Figure 1. below.

LISTENING: to the immediate concerns of learners

DIALOGUE: a questioning framework

1 What do you see?
Designed to elicit concrete details of an issue

2 What is the 'problem' here?
Designed to explore many facets of the issue

3 Is this your 'problem'?
Designed to connect issues to individual lives - student feelings and experiences

4 Why is there a 'problem'?
Designed to fit this individual experience into a larger historical, social or cultural perspective.

5 What can you do?
Designed to elicit courses of action to provide a new perspective on this problem or in some way ameliorate it

ACTION: situated politically and historically but also designed to enable learners to act locally and in ways relevant to their individual circumstances

Figure 1 Wallerstein's questions (1983).

As I have said dialogue is a labyrinthine journey however in describing it thus we run the risk of alienating teachers from the very strategies which may help them come to terms with what is a very complex task; teaching adult literacy and basic education. On the other hand a 'how-to' framework describing the dialogic process - or any other teaching process for that matter has the potential to 'launder' (McLaren:1989) the political intent inherent in critical notions of dialogue.

I have critiqued Wallerstein's work elsewhere (Shore:1991) for its lack of attention to the pragmatic aspects of questioning, for example frequency and sequencing of questions, and patterning of teacher responses to student talk. However, her framework does highlight four elements necessary to establish meaningful dialogue between teachers and students: teachers need to listen to students and recognise the complexity of their lives; classroom issues need to be relevant to students' lives; examination of issues should actively expose the relationship between the individual experiences of each student and the systematic way in which their experiences are symptomatic of structural forms of oppression embedded in the economic, political and sociocultural structure of society; and dialogue should arrive at forms of social and individual action which are capable of transforming existing social inequities at either the micro or macro level. The latter is particularly hard and is often what overwhelms teachers and teacher educators in their attempts to mediate the theory and practice of radical approaches.

Many of the elements of Wallerstein's work are central to 'good practice'. Adult literacy rhetoric exhorts teachers to listen to their students, and to use relevant experiences as the basis of learning. However I would propose that not all teaching encourages learners to see the links between their own lives and the systematic ways in which society may alienate and oppress them, or how learners may take action to subvert this oppression. It is in respect of these last two elements of Wallerstein's questions for dialogue that I believe many literacy teaching and teacher educator practices fall short of the ideals of critical literacy. I think we can't afford to let Universities and TAFE professional development departments off the hook here. It is extremely important to recognise the central role critical professional development plays in encouraging viable forms of critical practice. I'd like to look briefly now at one example of adult literacy teaching practice and highlight the constraints operating on this teacher in terms of her developing critical literacy practice if she wanted to.

Examining practice in one adult literacy classroom

In 1990 I undertook a study (Shore:1991) to analyse the questions a teacher asked in an adult literacy classroom[3]. The study emerged from my interest in the educational possibilities offered by radical adult education theory and the growing body of literature on critical adult literacy. Central to much of this literature is a critique of conventional education practice and the assumed power and authority of teachers which is often taken for granted by both educators and learners.

On the basis of my own teaching and my work as a tertiary educator I had growing suspicions about the egalitarian relationship between teachers and learners. But I also believed that it was possible to shift what appeared to be an asymmetric pattern of classroom interaction. I used ethnographic methods, including taping classroom discussions, to detail classroom interaction. In particular transcript analysis of classroom discussions focused on the teacher's questions during a planned discussion period, which was one of three phases within the class described in this study. I also interviewed the teacher to get a more detailed picture of her aims and purposes for teaching and the factors external to the classroom which influenced judgements she made about teaching.

The teacher in this study has many different beliefs about literacy development and these beliefs shaped her teaching aims and classroom intentions. She believes it is the teacher's responsibility to:

- meet the broad educational and leadership expectations students have of her as the teacher in the class
- meet specific literacy needs as stated by students in initial and ongoing academic counselling
- anticipate each student's future literacy needs and cater for those needs in class activities
- provide literacy activities which result in a written outcome, as this teacher believes writing is the essence of literacy development
- ensure that literacy activities are 'active' and 'integrated', that is that they encompass oral competency, the interpersonal understandings and abilities required to use the literacy skills acquired, and that all of this development is purposeful, in that it is related to the student's life and has some application for her or him
- maintain an interpersonal and group climate which is comfortable, secure and enjoyable so that students will feel involved and want to keep attending.

As the teacher attempts to meet these aims she is faced with a series of tensions about what to teach and how, and when to address specific aspects of literacy development.

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[3]The research was undertaken as part of a Master of Education at the University of South Australia. In this study the teacher did not deliberately set out to practice critical literacy and I have indicated elsewhere in this paper that this is crucial to understanding my analysis of her practice.

The tensions she faced were related to four areas:

- the comfort and/or challenge inherent in the learning environment and the extent to which students are presented with risks in learning
- the priority given to individual and/or group needs
- the amount of printed or oral work, or the particular type of literacy outcome to be achieved within the class, and
- the level of exploration of an issue which could reasonably be achieved during the discussion period without 'losing' student interest.

The teacher believed it was her job to resolve these tensions through specific teaching and organising practices. All of this had to be done bearing in mind the goals for literacy provision articulated by her DETAFE college, and that she was only employed part time.

During the 6 interviews I had with the teacher she kept returning to the four tensions, which I believe are magnified by her belief that she must meet the students' expectations of her as 'teacher figure', and the limited amount of time available to develop the above aims through class activities.

The teacher's beliefs and student expectations about literacy shape how it is practised in the classroom. She uses texts to focus literacy development and these further impact on the forms of literacy emerging from the classroom activities. In respect of the concept of dialogue it became evident that three aspects of teacher talk influence opportunities for dialogue: the type of questions the teacher asks, the timing of her questions and the feedback she offers to student responses. (See Shore (1991 and forthcoming) for a more detailed analysis of these questions and the possibilities for dialogue.) These three aspects of her talk all converge on the social relations of the classroom to bring about a form of communication which signals not only what literacy is, but also how it should be practised.

In the classroom in this study the pattern of communication established by the teacher gives students a voice they are denied in other areas of their lives. The teacher listens. She hears the students articulate the recurring feelings of pleasure and dissatisfaction they experience in their daily lives. She responds to them as individuals. She is able to identify particular literacy skills which need development. She is concerned about personal, interpersonal and academic development, and acknowledges their integrated nature. She realises that some of the women are seeking a way out of the current economic and social situation in which they find themselves and that they believe literacy will change the quality of their lives. She offers a haven in which the women in this class were able to grow personally and academically.

From a critical literacy perspective however, there were very few opportunities in this class for teacher and learners to engage in dialogue which interrogates the official shape

of knowledge. Nurturing and supporting students presents challenges to teachers particularly in the current political and economic climate. It takes some time to build the confidence of learners[4] and this is not always built into the outcomes of a 10 week course such as the one described in this study. The data in this study indicate that to ask a teacher to nurture, support *and* critically challenge students may actually require more skills than conventional ALBE teacher education programs offer[5].

Most literacy development in the class in this study is geared towards completion of tasks aimed at developing written outcomes based on exploration of a written passage which largely supports the status quo. Discussion in the class often implies that solutions to such issues as self-esteem and assertiveness are largely unproblematic. A 'problem-posing' (Freire:1970, Wallerstein:1983, Smyth:1987) approach which suggests alternative ways of viewing social interaction is rarely adopted.

In the study I undertook conditions exist which make literacy teaching difficult. Courses are structured around three hour sessions within a ten week term. The students' language and literacy skills vary markedly and the range of identified student needs is diverse (although many are related generally to gaining or improving employment opportunities). This class, like many other adult literacy classes, is set up in theory to accommodate the diversity of abilities and needs found in many adult literacy and basic education classes. See Davison, Ennis et al (1988) for further examples.

In the class in this study I believe the six teaching aims outlined above are often antagonistic, and individual needs may not always be met. Time constraints and other issues such as student and colleague expectations of literacy, influence exploration of social issues in any classroom, but the most significant influence on critical literacy development in this class is the teacher's *beliefs* about literacy and her role in its development.

The teacher did not set out to use critical literacy as the foundation of her classroom practice. She is aware that some perspectives of literacy promote social change. Her own perspective of literacy development is oriented towards personal change and participation in society as is, a line adopted by current government (ALLP:1991) and peak body (ACAL:1989) approaches to literacy. While the teacher in this study believes literacy development is an 'active', integrated, socially constructed process, she is not as confident or even convinced about the politically and historically constructed nature of literacy.

For a range of reasons associated with the historical development of adult literacy provision, funding arrangements, administrative and teaching demands and personal and professional beliefs about literacy development and social relations, this teacher has an

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[4]It is not my intention to present ALBE learners as fragile victims. Rather, some learners enter educational settings with a degree of uncertainty abput how the culture operates and their capacity to operate in that setting and have some influence on the ways in which they learn. McCormack and Pancini (1992) have addressed some of these issues.

[5]In fact currently there are no higher education preservice courses for Australian ALBE practitioners. Institutions such as the University of South Australia, La Trobe University and University of Technology, Sydney, offer various types of graduate and undergraduate ALBE or generalist adult education awards.

'active' approach to literacy development. This in itself is not a bad thing however it does in my view engender a partial approach to the complexities of literacy and language use.

While she is believed to be a person of some experience in the literacy field, this teacher's staff development has not accommodated perspectives which make problematic the nature of 'active' literacy learning and highlighted what might be obscured by 'active' constructions of literacy. Nor has staff development presented alternatives to 'active' understandings in such a way that the teacher has time to reflect on them and explore with other teachers the ways in which they might constrain actual classroom practices and future literacy development.

These points are significant in that they highlight the problematic nature of teacher development in a field where training is minimal, often rooted in primary or secondary contexts, may not address the complexities of critical literacy theory and is often unable to provide practical examples of the transformative potential of such theories.

Implications for staff development

Adult literacy provision in Australia has for some years been undergoing major change at a number of levels. Awareness of the nature of literacy, and increased funding for provision, policy development, staff development, resourcing and research are all areas which have been targetted for attention. Since International Literacy Year 1990, many of these changes have been consolidated in policy directions which actively support literacy as a central component of micro-economic reform and as a key factor in ensuring social justice for all Australians. As stated previously, however, these policy directions tend to support a form of literacy which advocates participation in society as it currently is structured. Policy is essentially uncritical of the incorporation of literacy into award restructuring processes, and is certainly not consistent with a critical perspective of literacy provision.

My critical analysis of the teacher's beliefs and questioning practices, dealt with in more detail in a forthcoming paper, and the possibilities for classroom dialogue only makes sense when posited within a framework of critical literacy development which: challenges traditional power relations and the ways teachers and students operate in classrooms, makes explicit the socially constructed and contestable nature of classroom knowledge, and examines the connections between that knowledge and the private lives of individuals.

This overarching framework has significant implications for professional development of ALBE teachers. Any policy or decision that proposes to consolidate and improve adult literacy must take factors such as teaching aims and tensions, staff development infrastructure, both past and present, and teacher understandings of classroom discourse into account if it is to adequately address the needs of the field.

Any move by teachers, teacher educators or policy makers to promote critical literacy in its political form faces further constraints because such a move challenges two of the current bases on which literacy provision is currently being expanded and promoted: first

that literacy is essential for national productivity and second that through improved literacy provision issues of social justice can be redressed.

Given the broader climate of policy decisions in Australia which reflect 'active', but not necessarily critical, literacy perspectives, literacy teachers and teacher educators are likely to find they work in a context which does not support critical literacy. Its potential to influence policy and structural aspects of provision is fairly limited because as Kevin Harris (1989) suggests it poses a threat to traditional understandings of educational practice. In the classroom Colin Lankshear (1991:24) argues that many radical educators may miss the point of the 'urgent felt needs of the illiterate, unskilled and dispossessed' and thus their radical concerns may be marginal to students' immediate needs.

Any attempts to promote critical literacy will require consideration of adequate staff development underpinned by principles of critical practice, and appropriate resources to support that change. For teachers who want to adopt a critical approach in their teaching, staff development will be necessary. At one level my own research suggests that we need to find out more about what actually happens in adult literacy classrooms. At the moment it appears that some practices may reflect the largely unequal relations of power predominant in initial schooling.

The questioning literature I have reviewed elsewhere (Shore:1991) suggests that literacy teachers who seek to establish a 'relearning' climate in their classrooms must have some understanding of the notion of dialogue. A dialogic practice intentionally challenges what is familiar, comfortable and natural. As Stephen Brookfield (1987) notes teachers who want to take up this practice within the context of a critical pedagogy must be competent, courageous, risk takers, with 'humility' and 'political clarity'.

To do this a dialogic and relearning focus is required. It implies responsibility on the part of both teacher and learner to be reflexive in their thinking, to challenge commonsense assumptions of classroom talk, to allow space to ask questions, to be courageous enough to actually ask questions and to ask questions for which there may be no answer or no single answer.

Because of its complex and at times uncomfortable nature, presentation of theoretical perspectives of dialogue within staff development programs will not guarantee that teachers take up consistent dialogic practice in the classroom. Staff development opportunities will be needed on an ongoing basis to further teachers' understandings of the process and to allow them to reflect on and challenge their beliefs and practices.

Professional development programs geared towards critical practice will have a number of intentions. They will be explicit about the power of language to name the world in both empowering and disempowering ways. There will be explicit attention to the complexities and contradictions inherent in transforming critical theoretical perspectives into critical practice.

Furthermore such programs will situate the teacher at the heart of critical practice and this will have two consequences. First, I believe critical teaching requires more of

teachers than conventional educational practice and teachers must be encouraged to develop an awareness of relations of power at both organisational and interpersonal levels. They will need to develop interpersonal skills which assist them to operate effectively in environments which may be hostile to their aims and intentions. Second the organisation will have a clear responsibility to reorient thinking and management practices which may currently subvert teachers' critical practice. (See Shore et al (1993) for further discussion of the importance of this if teacher's work in classrooms is not to be isolated from the wider policies and practices of the institution.)

Therefore professional development programs will need to address three things; the practicalities of teaching critical literacy, the means by which teachers advocate for change within their organisation, and the kind of organisation which will best provide teachers with an effective resource base for teaching critical literacy.

Conclusions

It is my belief that literacy programs and staff development programs which encourage learners to 'participate effectively' in classrooms, administrative settings and wider society, do little to enable them to challenge hidden social practices which systematically reproduce patterns of domination and subordination. To advocate critical literacy practice adds another set of tensions to those already faced by ALBE educators. These tensions include the following:

How do political considerations within the organisation impact on daily teaching practices and how do teachers understand and respond to these incursions?

If, as is often proposed, the politics of industry, community and TAFE settings are different, then what additional knowledge and practices are needed to work in and across these settings?

In view of recent increases in ALBE policy and funding, how much information must teachers access, to what level and to what degree of understanding?

More importantly in a field which is renowned for short term, contract employment, how will teachers employment take account of the need to become familiar with new policy and additionally to develop critical perspectives on that policy?

In such a feminised field where, how, and to what extent are gender issues examined and acted upon?

To what extent do ALBE educators unwittingly play a role in constraining possibilities for dialogue and 'relearning' and what strategies might redress asymmetric patterns of classroom interaction?

In what ways do ALBE resources and practices marginalise or silence the voices of different social groups and how might these processes be subverted?

How do various education methodologies and/or theories such as competency-based

learning, and whole language or genre approaches make space for groups to establish their difference as legitimate rather than marginal?

How will ALBE teachers address language, literacy and numeracy needs and is it reasonable to expect that teachers will have some facility in all of these areas?

Many writers propose that critical literacy is a means by which teachers and learners can more comprehensively address literacy needs in 'New Times'. The above list of tensions goes some way to establishing a set of issues to be considered in structuring professional development programs for ALBE teachers. If these tensions are not explored I believe we run the risk of disempowering teachers through calls for critcal practice which are not supported through publicly articulated and viable forms of critical professional development.

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